

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 FEA-01 ERDA-05 AID-05

CEA-01 CIAE-00 COME-00 EPG-02 EB-07 FPC-01 H-01

INR-07 INT-05 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 OMB-01 PM-04

OES-07 SP-02 SS-15 STR-04 TRSE-00 ACDA-07 NSCE-00

SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 DLOS-09 PA-01 PRS-01

ERDE-00 /130 W

-----070017Z 090390 /64/50

O 021136Z JUN 77

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6957

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY RABAT PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY VALLETTA PRIORITY

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY

CINCUSNAVEUR PRIORITY

EUCOM PRIORITY

COMSIXTHFLT PRIORITY

USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES PRIORITY

SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TUNIS 3846

CINCUSNAVEUR AND EUCOM FOR POLADS; USDOCOSOUTH PASS

CINCOSOUTH FOR POLAD

TEL AVIV FOR SENATOR RICHARDSTONE

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y - (TEXT PARAS 4 & 5)

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PLOS ENRG TS LY

SUBJECT: TUNISIAN-LIBYAN CONTINENTAL SHELF DISPUTE:

BOURGUIBA THREATENS FORCE

REF: STATE 125318 AND STATE 126818

1. DURING HALF-HOUR AUDIENCE WITH PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA
JUNE 1 SENATOR STONE AND I WERE GIVEN VERY LUCID EXPOSITION
OF TUNISIA'S CASE IN CURRENT CONFRONTATION OCCASIONED
BY PRESENCE OF "J.W. BATES" IN WATERS CLAIMED BY
TUNISIA. ONE OF HARDEST ASPECTS OF SITUATION FOR BOURGUIBA'S
GOVERNMENT IS PROBLEM OF EXPLAINING HOW PRESIDENT CARTER
COULD SEND WARM AND SINCERE VICTORY DAY MESSAGE WHILE
USG PROVES POWERLESS TO PREVENT ILLEGAL DRILLING BY
AN AMERICAN COMPANY. HE CONTRASTED OUR FAILURE TO
DISSUADE READING AND BATES FROM DRILLING FOR LIBYA WITH
OUR SUCCESS LAST SUMMER IN PREVENTING BUTTES INTERNATIONAL
FROM DRILLING FOR TUNISIA. THIS, BOURGUIBA SAID, WAS HARD
FOR TUNISIANS TO UNDERSTAND.

2. FACT THAT SHIP IS PREPARING TO DRILL IS BAD ENOUGH.
THIS PLACES SITUATION WHERE IT WAS WHEN SCARABEO IV WAS
THERE, BUT SCARABEO IV CEASED DRILLING WHERE TUNISIANS
DEMANDED IT. WHEN AND IF "J.W. BATES" BEGINS TO DRILL
IN DEFIANCE OF TUNISIA, SITUATION WILL CHANGE DRASTICALLY
AND BECOME "INTOLERABLE", SAID PRESIDENT, AND "WE WILL
HAVE TO EMPLOY OUR NAVAL VESSELS." HE EXPRESSED THE HOPE
THAT "AMERICAN CITIZENS ABOARD WOULD BE TAKEN OFF SO THEY
WILL NOT BE HURT IF THERE IS SHOOTING".

3. COMMENT: PRESIDENT'S TONE WAS SERIOUS AND DELIBERATE,
AS IF HE HAD ALREADY FACED THE DECISION TO REMOVE "J.W.
BATES" BY FORCE IF DRILLING IS BEGUN. AT ONE TIME DURING
OUR TALK HE COMPARED CURRENT SITUATION TO "BIZERTE IN 1961"
(WHEN BOURGUIBA SENT HUNDREDS OF UNARMED TUNISIANS TO
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THEIR DEATHS IN MARCH AGAINST FRENCH PARA GARRISON).

4. A FEW MOMENTS BEFORE THE AUDIENCE I SPOKE BRIEFLY
WITH DEFENSE MINISTER ABDALLAH FARHAT, ONE OF BOURGUIBA'S
LONG-TIME CONFIDANTS. HE TOLD ME, "THEY ARE PUSHING US
TO THE WALL. THEY ARE GOING TO LEAVE US WITH ONE CHOICE:
FORCE". FOREIGN MINISTRY CHATTY, ON THE OTHER
HAND, AFTER A DISCUSSION OF THE SITUATION WITH SENATOR
STONE AND ME CONCLUDED THAT "I MIGHT WELL FIND MYSELF IN
NEW YORK WITHIN THE NEXT THREE OR FOUR DAYS".

5. ALL GOT LEADERS WITH WHOM WE HAVE SPOKEN THESE PAST
FEW DAYS SEEMED TO BE WAITING WITH FINGERS CROSSED FOR
THE OUTCOME OF THE TULSA MEETING WITH READING AND BATES.
THEIR HOPE WAS THAT, IN SPITE OF LIBYAN PRESSURES AND
LOSS OF REVENUE, COMPANY COULD BE PERSUADED TO DELAY DRILLING
UNTIL MATTER CAN BE BROUGHT TO ARBITRATION. IF THIS HOPE
IS DASHED HARD CHOICES WILL HAVE TO BE FACED IN WHICH
GOT'S HAWKS AND DOVES WILL MAKE THEIR CASES. ORDINARILY

WE COUNT ON TUNISIANS TO DO THE SENSIBLE, PRAGMATIC
THING. ONLY ONCE SINCE INDEPENDENCE (AT BIZERTE IN 1961)
HAVE BOURGUIBA AND HIS COHORTS DONE THE UNTHINKABLE; THUS,
IT IS SIGNIFICANT THAT IN THE PRESIDENT'S MIND THE CURRENT
SITUATION IS A COMPARABLE ONE. IT IS THE HEIGHT OF IRONY
THAT THE GOT IN EVERY PAST CRISIS HAS ALWAYS LEANED UPON
US AND IN THIS CRISIS FINDS US WITH OUR HANDS TIED. WE
MAY BE LEFT WITH ONLY WORDS RPT WORDS BY WHICH OUR
OFFICIAL SYMPATHY AND SUPPORT MAY BE CONVEYED TO
THEM. I HOPE THAT DEPARTMENT'S PRESS GUIDANCE (STATE
125318) WHICH I FIND EXCELLENT WILL BE USED EARLY, OFTEN
AND IN HIGH-LEVEL USG PRONOUNCEMENTS OVER NEXT FEW DAYS.
IT SEEMS TO ME THAT THE TIME HAS COME FOR THIS. I ALSO
HOPE WE WILL BE ABLE TO CONVINCE OTHER WESTERN FRIENDS TO
TAKE SIMILAR PUBLIC STANDS.

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 ERDA-05 AID-05 CEA-01
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SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 DLOS-09 NEAE-00 PA-01
PRS-01 ERDE-00 /129 W

-----021336Z 035829 /50

O 021136Z JUN 77

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEIDATE 6958

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

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SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TUNIS 3846

CINCUSNAVEUR AND EUROM FOR POLADS; USDOCOSOUTH PASS
CINCOSOUTH FOR POLAD

TEL AVIV FOR SENATOR RICHARD STONE

6. FURTHERCOMMENT: SENATOR STONE, BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE
FOR TEL AVIV THIS MORNING, SUGGESTED I FORWARD TO THE
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DEPARTMENT FOR ITS CONSIDERATION HIS THOUGHT THAT, WITH
PRIOR GOT AGREEMENT, U.S. MIGHT TAKE THE INITIATIVE,
BECAUSE OF AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT, TO INSCRIBE THE CONTINENTAL
SHELF DISPUTE ON SECURITY COUNCIL'S AGENDA. I RECOGNIZE THAT
WASHINGTON WILL SEE "CONS" AS WELL AS "PROS" IN THIS
PROPOSAL, BUT THINK IT IS ONE OF OPTIONS WE SHOULD WEIGH
IN NEXT FEW DAYS. ITS CHIEF MERIT FROM U.S. VIEWPOINT
COULD BE TO PROVIDE READING AND BATES WITH POSSIBILITY
OF PLEADING FORCE MAJEUR UNDER ITS CONTRACT WITH LIBYA
WHILE MATTER IS SUB JUDICE.

7. FROM OUR VANTAGE POINT, IT WOULD SEEM USEFUL, IF,
DURING PERIOD BEFORE READING AND BATES' DIRECTORS' MEETING A
FURTHER AND HIGHER-LEVEL APPROACH COULD BE MADE TO
PRESIDENT THORNTON. I AM THINKING SPECIFICALLY OF UNDER
SECRETARIES HABIB AND/OR COOPER OR EVEN THE DEPUTY
SECRETARY OR THE SECRETARY.

8. WHILE FOREGOING PARAS 1 THROUGH 6 WERE IN DRAFT WE
HAVE RECEIVED STATE 126818 REPORTING TULSA MEETING,
WHICH INDICATES READING AND BATES HAS ALREADY STARTED
DRILLING, OR "PREPARATORY OPERATIONS" WHICH GOT WILL
CERTAINLY INTERPRET AS "DRILLING". IF SUCH IS THE CASE,
AND "J.W. BATES" DOES NOT CEASE AND DESIST FROM SUCH
ACTIVITY, I FEEL SURE GOT WILL PROVE LESS AMENABLE TO OUR
PLEA TO REMAIN CALM. I SHALL, HOWEVER, SEE FONMIN AS
SOON AS POSSIBLE AND REITERATE OUR HOPE FOR NO RASH
ACTION.
MULCAHY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DISPUTES, CONTINENTAL SHELF, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS
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Copy: SINGLE
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977TUNIS03846
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770206-0259, D770196-0843
Format: TEL
From: TUNIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770696/aaaadgbv.tel
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Litigation Code IDs:
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Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 STATE 125318, 77 STATE 126818
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 17-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2297828
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: TUNISIAN-LIBYAN CONTINENTAL SHELF DISPUTE: BOURGUIBA THREATENS FORCE
TAGS: PFOR, PLOS, ENRG, TS, LY, (BOURGUIBA, HABIB)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/f5ee4086-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009